

Martin Luther and the Reformation

Prepare to Read

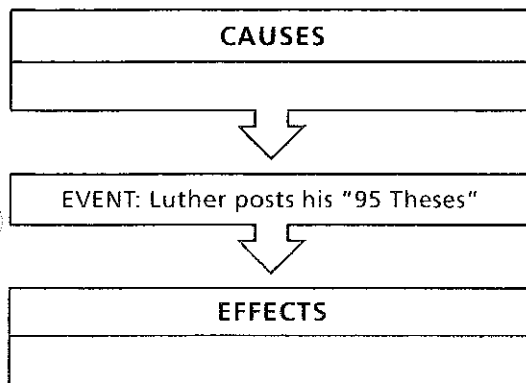
Objectives

In this section you will

1. Understand the developments that led to the Reformation.
2. Learn about Luther's criticism of the Church.
3. Understand the immediate effects of Luther's ideas in Europe.

Taking Notes

As you read, look for the effects of the Church's behavior. Copy the diagram below, and record your findings in it.



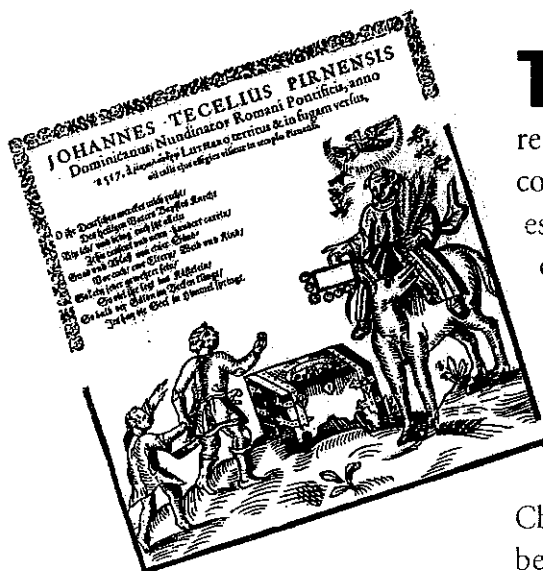
Target Reading Skill

Understand Effects

A cause makes an effect happen. Sometimes a cause creates several effects. As you read this section, think of the behavior of the Church as a cause. What was the effect of this cause? Write the effects in your Taking Notes diagram.

Key Terms

- **indulgence** (in DUL juns) *n.* an official pardon for a sin given by the pope in return for money
- **salvation** (sal VAY shun) *n.* to go to heaven, in religious terms
- **Reformation** (ref ur MAY shun) *n.* the term used to describe Luther's break with the Church and the movement it inspired



Reformers tried to stop Church abuses by distributing leaflets such as the one above.

The preacher was Johann Tetzel (YOH hahn Tet sul), and in return for a contribution to the Church, Tetzel said, a person could receive an indulgence. An indulgence allowed the buyer to escape punishment for sins. Moreover, Tetzel said, an indulgence could be used to help a loved one who had died. In vivid language, Tetzel told of the torment of the dead as they suffered for their sins. This suffering could be avoided, Tetzel suggested, for a small sum.

The granting of indulgences was not new in the Church. It had been taking place for centuries. In the early 1500s, the Church was trying to raise money for a glorious new church to be built in Rome. Tetzel was selling indulgences as part of this effort. However, attitudes towards this and other Church practices were changing. For a German monk named Martin Luther (MAHRT un LOO thur), Johann Tetzel's actions went too far.



Differences Between Catholics and Protestants

This German woodcut from the Reformation visually expresses religious conflicts. **Critical Thinking** Note the details in the two halves of the woodcut. Which half represents Protestants and which represents Catholics?

The Church at the Time of Luther

As you have read, the Church had been at the very heart of medieval European life. In fact, during the medieval period, the Church had become one of the most powerful political institutions in Europe. It carried out wars and made alliances with other states. Its leader, the Pope, was a major public figure. His power was very like that of a king. Often, it seemed that the Church was involved as much in the affairs of the world as in questions of faith.

You have read about Erasmus and other humanist writers of the Renaissance. Many of these thinkers called attention to the changes in the Church. They observed that Church leaders had, in some cases, lost sight of the Church's main purpose—to guide people's religious life.

In the early 1500s, one of those who was dissatisfied with the Church was a monk named Martin Luther. For several years, Luther had struggled with his belief in Church teachings. For example, he was troubled by the Church's belief in the importance of doing good works as a way to get to heaven.

It was while Luther was struggling with these questions that Johann Tetzel began his campaign to sell indulgences. When Luther heard of Tetzel's efforts, he became angry. He decided to issue an official criticism to the Church.

Reading Check How did the Church's great power lead to criticism of the Church during the Renaissance?

Luther Starts the Reformation

In October 1517, Luther wrote a document in which he challenged the Church on the issue of indulgences. This document featured 95 *theses*, or arguments. Luther posted his Ninety-Fives Theses on the Church door at Wittenberg, Germany.

Church officials tried to silence Luther. Luther responded by widening his criticism of the Church. For example, he argued that people could achieve salvation through faith alone. **Salvation**, in religious terms, means to go to heaven. This differed from Church teachings on the importance of doing good works. Luther also challenged the role of priests. In Church teachings, only a priest could perform certain Church rituals. Wrote Luther, "A priest . . . is nothing else than an officeholder."

Luther also challenged the authority of the pope to rule on religious matters. He said that the Bible was the only true authority. If the pope's teachings did not follow the Bible, Luther said, people could disobey the pope.

Luther's ideas outraged Church officials. They tried to force German officials to have Luther punished. Luther refused to take back what he had said and written. "Here I stand, may God help me. Amen," he said.

In 1521 the Church succeeded in having Luther labeled an outlaw in Germany. However, Luther's popularity was growing, and his ideas were spreading quickly. The judgment against him was never enforced.

✓ **Reading Check** What did Luther say was the final authority in religious matters?



Understand Effects

In this section, you have read about Luther's criticisms of the Church. What effects did Luther's criticisms have on the Church? How did Church leaders respond to his actions and statements?



The portrait above shows a quiet Martin Luther, but in the illustration to the right, members of the upper class look on as Luther posts his Ninety-Five Theses.



The Reformation Succeeds

The **Reformation** is the term used to describe Luther's break with the Church and the movement it inspired. This movement continued in the 1520s.

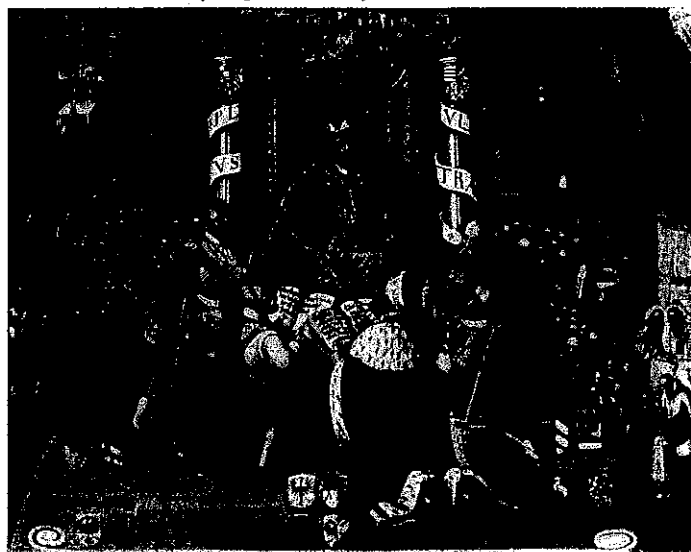
There are many reasons for the Reformation's success. Many Germans were attracted to Luther's teachings. Some nobles resented the pope and the power of Rome. They welcomed a break with the Church. The poor were encouraged by what they saw as Luther's message of equality. In the 1520s, German peasants rose in revolt. They were disappointed when Luther spoke out against them. He believed that people should respect authority in nonreligious matters.

Still, Lutheranism (loo thur un iz um), as the movement was called, took hold in many parts of Germany. It also spread to other parts of Europe, including Sweden and Norway. In 1555 the Church of Rome finally gave in. With the Peace of Augsburg (peas uv AWGS burg), Lutherans won the right to practice their religion.

The Peace of Augsburg did not end the Reformation. In the next section, you will read about how Reformation ideas affected other parts of Europe.

✓ Reading Check Why were peasants drawn to Luther's teachings?

©The delivery of the Augsburg Confession, 25th June 1530, 1617 (oil on panel) German School (17th Century) Georgenkirche, Eisenach, Germany/Bridgeman Art Library



In the painting above, German princes in 1530 present Emperor Charles V with the Augsburg Confession, in which Philip Melancthon tried to present Lutheran theology in a form that Roman Catholics could accept. His attempt failed.

Section 3 Assessment

Key Terms

Review the key terms at the beginning of this section. Use each term in a sentence that explains its meaning.

Target Reading Skill

What effect did Martin Luther's teachings have on religion in Europe?

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

1. (a) **Explain** What was the role of the Church in European life in the Renaissance?

(b) **Draw Inferences** Why do you think the political power of the pope and Church officials troubled many people in Europe?

2. (a) **Identify** What action by Johann Tetzel upset Luther and led to the Ninety-Five Theses?

(b) **Synthesize Information** Which of Luther's key complaints against the Church did the selling of indulgences represent?

3. (a) **Recall** What happened to Luther after he was declared an outlaw in Germany?

(b) **Analyze Information** Why do you think the movement started by Martin Luther is known as the Reformation?

Writing Activity

The year is 1520. Write a memo to the pope, summarizing the events taking place in Germany. Briefly trace the story behind Martin Luther and his ideas. Explain how these ideas differ from Church teachings.

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